A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF

ST. NICHOLAS, ROCHESTER,

On JUNE 24, 1785,

(Being the Day of the Viſitation of *the Rev. John Law, D.D. Archdeacon* of *Rocheſter*,)

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A LARGE APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

Various Arguments on the Utility and Importance of the Inſtitution, and Anſwers to Objections;

TOGETHER WITH

An Account of their Eſtabliſhment in the Pariſhes of BOUGHTON-BLEAN and HEARNHILL, KENT.

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PREFACE.

THE writer of the following Diſcourſe can attribute its flattering reception at the time of delivery to nothing but his own good fortune in having ſelected a Subject, which not only ſeemed to meet the general approbation of his Rev^d. Audience, but had previouſly (though unknown to him) employed much of their thoughts and attempts towards an extent of its practice. This coincidence of ſentiments naturally operated as a prejudice in its favour, and produced that candid allowance for its demerits as a compoſition, which the writer is but too ſenſible will need apology, when thus ſubmitted to public peruſal.——However, he ſtill hopes to ſcreen his imperfections of this ſort under the

the utility and importance of his ſubject; which importance once admitted, a communication of whatever belongs to that point (eſpecially during its infant-practice) cannot be too extenſive. In this perſuaſion he ventures abroad, truſting to the favourable interpretation of his deſigns by all well-wiſhers in general tothe cauſe of Chriſtianity, and ſoliciting in particular with due deference the countenance and ſupport of his Clerical Brethren in any ſchemes of parochial management, that may tend to the better obſervance of the Lord's Day and to the inſtruction of the poor and ignorant.

St.

ST. MATTHEW, xi, 5.

—" THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED " TO THEM."

THOUGH the diſpoſitions and views of the multitude that flocked around our bleſſed Saviour, were as different almoſt as their perſons, yet did He condeſcend upon various occaſions to ſatisfy their diſtinct intereſts and to comply with their ſeparate humours, as far as was conſiſtent with innocence and truth. Thus to thoſe, who followed him out of gratitude for paſt favours, He promiſed ſtill greater on their continuance in obedience, whilſt on thoſe, who came in expectation of benefits, He graciouſly conferred them. There were ſome, who attended on purpoſe to hear and profit by his inſtructive diſcourſes, and to theſe " *never man ſpake like him*;" while to others, who thought to entangle Him in his talk by their artful queſtions, He replied in a manner arguing his own divine wiſdom, and which muſt have convinced any hearts leſs obdurate than theirs. The loaves and fiſhes were an enticement to

others;

others; theſe He fed. There were alſo many good parents, who were eager to have their tender offspring noticed by our Lord as He paſſed by, (a diſtinction always coveted from men of eminence for their piety and virtue) and who therefore were ever ready to place their children in his way, "*that He might touch them*;" towards theſe infants He benignly ſtretched forth his hands and bleſſed them, uttering at the ſame time thoſe encouraging expreſſions of kindneſs and good-will, "*Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.*" The conſequence of this attention to the peculiar exigencies, intereſts and paſſions of his followers was, that though ſome of his kind inſtructions were ſcattered to the wind, though ſome "*of his good ſeed fell by the way-ſide, on ſtony places or amid thorns,*" yet a great ſhare alſo "*fell on good ground and brought forth fruit abundantly.*"

But there was ſtill another deſcription of men, who flocked around our bleſſed Lord in great numbers. Theſe were the ignorant and gaping croud, who ſeem to judge their preſence neceſſary wherever any thing is going forward, and who are apt to follow their leaders they know not why, they know not where, but only out of curioſity to hear or ſee "*ſomething new.*" To theſe Chriſt exhibited in his own perſon a ſight altogether new. For the Jewiſh Commonalty had been ſo long uſed to the vain parade and oſtentation of their own Scribes and Doctors, that a preacher like our bleſſed Saviour without pride, a teacher of righteouſneſs to the ignorant and fooliſh, muſt have been to them "*a novelty indeed.*" This novelty, viz. "*the preaching of the*

"*Goſpel*

" *Goſpel thus freely to the poor*" our Lord was pleaſed to make a diſtinguiſhing ſign (in his anſwer to John's diſciples) of his being the true Meſſiah. The miraculous powers, which were ſo many other marks of his kingdom, ceaſed we know when that kingdom was ſo far eſtabliſhed as to have no further need of them; but this great characteriſtic remains to be exerciſed in all ages of the Church, to be a ſtanding evidence of the benevolent and comprehenſive principles of that Goſpel, which not only pays no reſpect to the perſons of men, but ſearches out the meek and lowly upon earth, as peculiar objects of its care and attention. " *Hearken my beloved brethren* (ſays St. James ii, 5,) *hath not God* " *choſen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom* " *which he hath promiſed to them that love him?*" The poor we ſhall have always with us to the end of the world; to the poor therefore is the Goſpel always to be preached.

What our bleſſed Lord himſelf then thus pointed out, as a peculiar ſign of the authority of his own miſſion and of his being the promiſed Meſſiah, ſuch of his followers as have received their commiſſion to inſtruct and to preach in his name cannot but liſten to with reſpect and deference: conſequently there can need little apology (I truſt) to the preſent Audience, for wiſhing to engage their attention in behalf of the religious concerns of our poor and ignorant brethren.

It would be trifling and impertinent to conſume much of the preſent time in tracing at large the good influence of education in general; and of an early religious education in particular;

 ſince

ſince thoſe before whom I ſpeak muſt be ſo well ſatisfied both from perſonal and profeſſional experience of its boundleſs utility. But however we may inculcate the benefits and neceſſity of early inſtilling virtuous principles and habits, yet we muſt all of us be too ſenſible of the deaf ear that is turned on all our good advice on this head, and of the evils reſulting from its ſo frequent neglect. For from whence has diſſipation and vice found the means of ſpreading its baneful influence ſo far and wide, but from the want of care and ſkill in opening the bud of reaſon? from whence has profaneneſs and infidelity ventured to ſtalk with gigantic ſtride through the land, but from the failure of an early moral and religious culture?

When through a neglect of inſtilling better principles, a contempt of ferious thoughts and virtuous impreſſions is ſuffered to take poſſeſſion of the mind, is permitted to infuſe its ſpreading poiſon, and to grow up with the years and ſtature of the body, no wonder that the promoters of virtue both by profeſſion and practice have little attention paid them, no wonder that their perſons are ſo frequently deſpiſed, and that all their inſinuations of the importance and beauty of holineſs are treated with contempt and ſcorn. "*What have I to do with thee? I know not* "*whence thou art*," is the mildeſt reply of the Sceptic and Infidel of riper years, who has never been accuſtomed to liſten to the voice of the moral and religious preacher in his earlier days:--- if the Maſter be called Beelzebub, how can his followers and ſervants expect a better appellation.

When

When the good old Simeon was bleſſed with the ſight of the infant Jeſus, when he held him in his arms, full of holy joy and rapture, he broke forth (amid his own perſonal gratitude for being permitted to live to ſee that day) into prophetic declarations of what would follow the birth of Chriſt. "*Behold* (ſays he to the virgin Mary, St. Luke ii, 34) "*this child is ſet for the* "*fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael, and for a ſign that ſhall* "*be ſpoken againſt; that the thoughts of many hearts may be re-* "*vealed.*" For a ſign that ſhall be ſpoken againſt---we need but repeat the words to be ſenſible, that they are now as well as have been heretofore in a ſtate of moſt viſible accompliſhment. This child appointed by God to be the author of peace and good will towards men, and his doctrines to be the ſtandard of true religion, is become a ſtumbling block of offence to many, is reviled and blaſphemed and his precepts ſet at nought; ſo that in theſe our days the matter lies not ſo much in adjuſting the ſpeculative opinions of the different ſects of Chriſtians, as in maintaining the truth of Chriſtianity itſelf againſt the monſtrous growth of vice and infidelity. But ſome good may be drawn from the worſt of evils, when under the management of a well-diſpoſed mind: "*The thoughts of all hearts will by theſe means be* "*revealed.*" The indifference and lukewarmneſs of ſome, the total deſertion of others will become viſible, and thus the ſincerity of all be tried, that "the remnant of the faithful" may be diſcloſed.

As to ſupport, encourage and increaſe this remnant is "*our*" peculiar and important province, ſo neither ought we to deſpond in its execution, though ſurrounded with many difficulties. "*Though an hoſt of men,* (ſays the Pſalmiſt, xxvii, 3) "*were encamped againſt me, yet ſhall not my heart be afraid; and,* "*though there roſe up war againſt me, yet will I put my truſt in* "*Him.*" Our warfare is aſſuredly not only commenced, but already carried on to a dreadful extremity; not indeed in the ſhape of impriſonments, fines, tortures and burnings for the name of Chriſt, but in ſetting at nought our profeſſion and perſons as below much notice, and pointing all the ſhafts of ridicule, contempt and ſcorn on our Lord and Maſter himſelf and all his holy doctrines. Never therefore was there more occaſion than at preſent for putting on the whole armour of Chriſt, that we may be enabled to ſupport the ſpiritual conflict; never was there more neceſſity of ſtanding forth with boldneſs and confidence, and of ſhewing ourſelves zealouſly affected in a good and righteous cauſe. The integrity and purity of our own perſonal characters, together with the diſintereſted pains we are ſeen to take in promoting virtuous and religious habits in others, could not fail of being both proofs to others of our own ſincerity, and of doing much good even amidſt "*a ſinful and adulterous generation.*" Theſe are our true ſhields of defence, which will blunt the keen edge of many an offenſive weapon that is thrown againſt ourſelves and our holy religion.

It would ill become one of ſo private and inſignificant a character as myſelf to touch upon the former point; it is a matter of conſcience to each individual, to be adjudged by conſcience alone and to conſcious feelings therefore be it now wholly referred. But as to the latter we may and ought always to be ready to communicate with one another on any probable ſchemes for a reformation of manners, on any new plans of parochial management, that may ſeem to promiſe any good; eſpecially on ſuch as may tend to the improvement of virtuous habits among the poor and ignorant, and to the better obſervation of the Lord's Day, whoſe profanation by all ranks of people is become ſo truly grievous. As a matter of communication alone then ſhall I preſume to dwell on what follows; happy not to be deemed an impertinent intruder into the concerns of my brethren; happier ſtill, if they ſhould think favourably of what I may advance; but moſt fortunate of all, if any one ſhould be induced to give me the ſanction of his own example, in a matter which I have been enabled to accompliſh in my own place of reſidence* with much proſpect of ſucceſs; I mean the introduction of "*Sunday Schools*" for the inſtruction of the poor and ignorant.

It has been judiciouſly remarked†, that the great error of the Romiſh Miſſionaries in the Eaſt, and which occaſioned at laſt

* Boughton Blean.

† See Dr. Vincent's Sermon preached in Saint Paul's, 1784, at the yearly Meeting of the London Charity-Schools.

their

their ejection from every country they entered was, " *their ap-* " *plication to the Princes of every nation rather than to the People.*" They falſely concluded, that the converſion of the prince comprehended that of the people; and therefore (captivated alſo by the ſplendour of a royal name) their whole efforts were pointed at this ſingle object. The conſequence was what might naturally be expected, the protection of the prince continued no longer than his own whim or paſſion directed him, and the moment this changed, there was a party ready formed by their rivals in court-favour to effect the ruin of their cauſe. Whereas had the application been firſt made, where Chriſt and his Apoſtles made it, " *to the body of the people, to the poor and igno-* " *rant*;"---had thoſe of humble ſtation once been taught (as the precepts of Chriſtianity certainly do teach them) to be better ſubjects, better citizens and better men, the ſuperior ranks muſt have proceeded for their own intereſt from mere ſufferance to approbation and protection, and at length poſſibly to a participation themſelves of what they were convinced by experience had ſo good an effect on others. The progreſs indeed by theſe means would have been very gradual, almoſt inſenſible for a time, but would have made its own ſilent way by building on a firm foundation till at laſt it reached the courts and palaces of the mighty upon earth; which was actually the caſe with reſpect to the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian religion in the Roman Empire.

Now though our lot is fallen in a fairer land, and we poſſeſs a more goodly heritage; though we are not Miſſionaries in wild

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and ſavage countries, and conſequently enjoy a number of advantages and bleſſings with regard to the practice of our profeſſional duty, which they cannot experience, who undertake ſo laborious and dangerous an office, yet we may gain inſtruction ſometimes for our conduct at home by an avoidance of ſuch errors as have occaſioned their frequent failure abroad. We are all "ſent" into our different pariſhes for the ſame purpoſes as foreign Miſſionaries, viz. to promote the belief and practice of the Chriſtian Religion to the utmoſt of our power. In conſequence of which we aim perhaps with the moſt diſintereſted and pious views at introducing more regularity into the behaviour of the rich and powerful amongſt us. This plan we purſue under the notion that their better conduct would have a mighty influence on the manners of their inferior neighbours; and ſo far we judge right, becauſe their ill conduct ſerves greatly to diſſeminate vice. But if this influence over the behaviour of the inferior ariſes (as it too often does) from views of intereſt alone, it ceaſes of courſe when that intereſt ceaſes or changes of courſe (like the Eaſtern Princes above) with the caprice of the Principal: whereas conviction of the heart abideth for ever.

Besides we all know the difficulties we have to encounter, when we would endeavour to perſuade our ſuperiors in all outward circumſtances of life to alter their modes of living on our repreſentation. Even in a mind not much averſe in itſelf to the cauſe of virtue and religion, the prejudices of education, the habits of company, the delirium of faſhion are often ſo ſtrongly rivetted,

rivetted, as to render the ſervice deſperate in which we may think it our duty nevertheleſs to engage.

By others, who have long bid adieu to all moral impreſſions, we are deemed impertinent and troubleſome and officious intruders, are told that religion is only fit for illiberal and vulgar minds, and are therefore bid to attend to our own concerns without interfering in their habits of life---" *for who made thee* (ſay " they) *a ruler and a judge over us?*" Where this is the caſe, it were moſt prudent perhaps to follow their advice, to let them alone among whom we are likely to do ſo little good and to turn to our other concerns amid thoſe, who may perhaps be ſo illiberal and vulgar-minded, as to think they have a moral duty to perform and a God to ſerve. It were moſt adviſeable (I ſay) to act thus; being content with exhibiting at the ſame time in our own conduct a bright example to them of the doctrines we preach, and with neglecting no deference or attention that can innocently be paid to their ſuperior rank, but cautiouſly avoiding all perſonal countenance or compliance with ſuch of their irregularities and vices, as would but further degrade us even in their eyes, as well as prevent our walking blameleſsly in the ſight of thoſe committed to our charge.

But if we turn our thoughts and attentions to the worldly and ſpiritual intereſts of a lower claſs of our Chriſtian brethren, there ſeems much greater probability of eventual ſucceſs. Here, as in the firſt inſtance we have fewer prejudices and difficulties to encounter, ſo are we placed in that very ſituation, which is of all

others

others moſt favourable to our good wiſhes and deſigns. The poor (more eſpecially in country places) are naturally diſpoſed "*to look up*" to their Miniſter for his aſſiſtance and advice on all occaſions, and to be diſſatisfied if they receive it not at his hands. The poor are entitled in a peculiar manner "*to have "the Goſpel preached unto them*," it being one of the characteriſtics of Chriſt's kingdom that it ſhould be ſo: and though they may not always profit by the ſame, yet they are, generally ſpeaking, found to liſten with more attention than their betters. This was the caſe in our Saviour's time alſo; "*the common "people* (we read) *heard him gladly, while the rich and powerful "accuſed him of blaſphemy and ſought to entangle him in his talk.*" And if the poor are accuſed of being thoughtleſs and vicious to a great degree (though not more ſo ſurely than thoſe of higher rank) yet does it often proceed from the total ignorance in which they have been brought up: hence many times and hence alone their habits of idleneſs and profaneneſs, and their neglect of all religious duties. They frequently know no better; an excuſe their richer neighbours have not always to plead. But who ſhould have taught them better? Their parents and friends perhaps were not able. The royal pſalmiſt makes anſwer for us "*when my father and my mother forſake me, the Lord taketh me up.*" (Pſalm 27, 12) Such then as are appointed to perform all good offices in the name of the Lord ſhould take up the cauſe of the helpleſs and indigent, and ſhould ſtrive to promote their wholeſome inſtruction. Thus would the ſtate of civilization as well

as of religion be advanced in the nation, and they would deſerve well of the public in general, who endeavoured to diſpel the thick clouds of ignorance and to train up the moſt numerous and perhaps uſeful members of the community in the paths of induſtry and virtue.

But if we find ourſelves (for I cannot help making the application) unable to convert many of the vicious and unbelieving of riper years among the poor, we may ſtrengthen at leaſt the faith and encourage the good practice of thoſe, who wiſh not to ſwerve from their duty, we may attempt to raiſe a ſtock of good Chriſtians amid the riſing generation. Now a comprehenſive method has been deviſed of furniſhing means of inſtruction for the younger and poorer part of a pariſh, which ſeems to be gaining daily ground and promiſes to be productive of much good effect, if carefully followed up. The inſtitution alluded to is that of "*Sunday Schools*," which are already eſtabliſhed in many places. The points aimed at in their introduction are, "*to furniſh opportunities of inſtruction to the children of the poor* "*without interfering with any weekly induſtry; to infuſe into the* "*tender minds of infancy ideas of decency, ſobriety and induſtry; to* "*inure them to early habits of regularity in their attendance at* "*Church and to teach them how to ſpend the leiſure hours of Sunday* "*to their own improvement, advantage and happineſs, which are* "*now almoſt univerſally conſumed in idleneſs, profanation and riot.*"

Such is the outline of this benevolent plan; its interior regulations, extent and management muſt depend on the ſituation, abilities

abilities and charitable diſpoſitions of thoſe pariſhes, who may be inclined to adopt ſuch a ſcheme of Chriſtian improvement. I ſcruple not to call it an act of Chriſtian benevolence, ſince its advantages are both obvious and numerous; too numerous to be recounted on the preſent occaſion, too obvious to need illuſtration before the preſent Audience.* No one ſurely can object to its principle except he be either ſome ſullen promoter of dark and groſs ignorance in the lower claſs of people, to ſerve the purpoſes of ambition, ſuperſtition and ſlavery, or ſome refined philoſopher of modern days, who with a degree of faſtidious delicacy affects to conſider all infant inſtruction in no better a light than as the parent of prejudice and mental ſubjection. But to give an early bias in the cauſe of virtue, together with all the advantages of firſt poſſeſſion, of habit and cuſtom, is what the beſt judges of human nature (independent of religious and Chriſtian conſiderations) have approved and inſiſted on, as the beſt means of promoting all the ſubſtantial and civil intereſts of a State, as well as of "*that righteouſneſs, which alone exalteth a nation.*" The humane Howard in his obſervations on the ſtate of foreign priſons furniſhes us with a remark much to our preſent purpoſe; "*that the reaſon of there being ſo few felons in many "priſons in Switzerland is to be ſought, not in the ſeverity of the "penal laws or in the frequency of executions, but in the great care "that is taken in thoſe Cantons to give children, even the pooreſt, a "moral and religious education:*"---ſo beneficial is early inſtruc-

* See theſe Advantages ſtated at large in the Appendix.

tion, and ſo much more important it is to the Community to "*prevent*" than to "*puniſh*" crimes. To enlarge on this obvious truth would be to trifle away time; let us rather proceed to the pleaſant taſk of reviewing its advantageous practice in the inſtitution of Sunday Schools.

THE firſt circumſtance that gave riſe to the idea of theſe infant nurſeries of inſtruction was the concern it gave to all ſerious perſons to ſee the trifling, indecent and irreligious behaviour of ſo many of the poorer ſort both old and young on the Lord's Day. The profanation of the Sabbath (we know) has been lamented at the execution of the law's laſt dreadful ſentence by many a penitent thief and murderer, as the firſt ſtep and principal leader to that career of intoxication, debauchery and vice, which at length terminated in ſo ſhameful and ignominious an exit. But theſe humane and conſiderate perſons were very ſenſible that theſe idle and irreligious practices on the Lord's Day originated in numbers from their extreme ignorance alone and want of better advice. They therefore ſet themſelves to find a remedy, which though perhaps incapable of healing the whole diſeaſe might yet abate much of its malignant humour. They knew that the labour of endeavouring to ſtop the torrent of ingrafted and habitual vice was difficult and diſheartening, that to recall the inveterate practitioner from his beaten track of irregularity and impiety was a deſperate and almoſt impracticable attempt. The Prophet's queſtions then preſented themſelves to their view---"*Whom ſhall we teach knowledge? whom ſhall we*

"*make*

" *make to underſtand doctrine?*" and the Prophet's anſwers were complete and ſatisfactory;---" *even him that is weaned from the* " *milk and drawn from the breaſts: for here precept may be given* " *upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little,*" as opportunity ſerves and the infant capacity opens. Here a foundation may be laid on a wide and firm baſis, not ſo much indeed for remedying the preſent evil with reſpect to thoſe who are advanced in years of ignorance, inattention and vice, as for preventing its further growth and divulgation amid the riſing generation. By a cloſe application (argued theſe true promoters of the cauſe of Chriſtianity) to the improvement of theſe ignorant and unadviſed children, by ſetting on foot little ſeminaries on a Sunday for the inſtruction of many, who may be employed in manual induſtry on a week-day, we may be able with God's bleſſing to do ſome good, even to draw ſo many little Moſeſes (as it were) out of the waters of deſtruction; and though we cannot educate them, as Pharaoh's daughter did him, in all the wiſdom and learning of Egypt, yet we may do what is ſtill better for their purpoſe---teach them to be ſober and induſtrious members of ſociety in their humble callings and inſtruct them in all the plain and ſaving knowledge of Chriſt.---Thus argued (as we may ſuppoſe) thoſe benevolent citizens of Glouceſter, who have the honour of taking the lead in theſe Chriſtian inſtitutions.

If then to aſſiſt the poor and needy in the education of their children be an act of Chriſtian charity; if the gift of food and raiment

tion, and ſo much more important it is to the Community to "*prevent*" than to "*puniſh*" crimes. To enlarge on this obvious truth would be to trifle away time; let us rather proceed to the pleaſant taſk of reviewing its advantageous practice in the inſtitution of Sunday Schools.

THE firſt circumſtance that gave riſe to the idea of theſe infant nurſeries of inſtruction was the concern it gave to all ſerious perſons to ſee the trifling, indecent and irreligious behaviour of ſo many of the poorer ſort both old and young on the Lord's Day. The profanation of the Sabbath (we know) has been lamented at the execution of the law's laſt dreadful ſentence by many a penitent thief and murderer, as the firſt ſtep and principal leader to that career of intoxication, debauchery and vice, which at length terminated in ſo ſhameful and ignominious an exit. But theſe humane and conſiderate perſons were very ſenſible that theſe idle and irreligious practices on the Lord's Day originated in numbers from their extreme ignorance alone and want of better advice. They therefore ſet themſelves to find a remedy, which though perhaps incapable of healing the whole diſeaſe might yet abate much of its malignant humour. They knew that the labour of endeavouring to ſtop the torrent of ingrafted and habitual vice was difficult and diſheartening, that to recall the inveterate practitioner from his beaten track of irregularity and impiety was a deſperate and almoſt impracticable attempt. The Prophet's queſtions then preſented themſelves to their view---"*Whom ſhall we teach knowledge? whom ſhall we*

"*make*

" *make to underſtand doctrine?*" and the Prophet's anſwers were complete and ſatisfactory;---" *even him that is weaned from the* " *milk and drawn from the breaſts: for here precept may be given* " *upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little,*" as opportunity ſerves and the infant capacity opens. Here a foundation may be laid on a wide and firm baſis, not ſo much indeed for remedying the preſent evil with reſpect to thoſe who are advanced in years of ignorance, inattention and vice, as for preventing its further growth and divulgation amid the riſing generation. By a cloſe application (argued theſe true promoters of the cauſe of Chriſtianity) to the improvement of theſe ignorant and unadviſed children, by ſetting on foot little ſeminaries on a Sunday for the inſtruction of many, who may be employed in manual induſtry on a week-day, we may be able with God's bleſſing to do ſome good, even to draw ſo many little Moſeſes (as it were) out of the waters of deſtruction; and though we cannot educate them, as Pharaoh's daughter did him, in all the wiſdom and learning of Egypt, yet we may do what is ſtill better for their purpoſe---teach them to be ſober and induſtrious members of ſociety in their humble callings and inſtruct them in all the plain and ſaving knowledge of Chriſt.---Thus argued (as we may ſuppoſe) thoſe benevolent citizens of Glouceſter, who have the honour of taking the lead in theſe Chriſtian inſtitutions.

If then to aſſiſt the poor and needy in the education of their children be an act of Chriſtian charity; if the gift of food and raiment

raiment wears away, but the nouriſhment of the ſoul (when properly applied) endures for ever; if to prevent the growth of idleneſs and vice by inculcating early habits of induſtry, ſobriety, and virtue be a matter of the firſt importance, not only to the children themſelves, but to the neighbourhood in general, where they are ſituated; if a religious obſervance of the Lord's Day be a ſerious concern in a Chriſtian land; if laſtly a good deed be a proper employment for a good day, then we may confidently pronounce, that Sunday Schools are laudable inſtitutions and worthy of all encouragement.

With reſpect to their good and laſting effects on the morals of thoſe, who may be brought up in them, it is time alone that can determine on their general utility. Where they have been introduced long enough to make the obſervation, their practical good conſequences have been declared to be very viſible; where they are of a later date, they are ſaid to promiſe very fair. We ought not therefore to be too quickly diſheartened at any rubs we may meet with in the proſecution of ſuch a deſign, nor expect to find immediate good conſequences in a matter that regards a gradual improvement and a diſtant completion. The principle of their inſtitution being confeſſedly good, the trial muſt be made in patience and perſeverance, and the final iſſue recommended in our prayers to the protection and bleſſing of Almighty God.

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APPENDIX.

THE AUTHOR was not willing to make any addition to the Diſcourſe itſelf, but to publiſh it exactly as delivered from the Pulpit. But as it was then ſolely calculated to engage the attention of a "*Clerical Audience*," it appeared needleſs to enlarge on many points relative to the good effects of infant inſtruction in general, and to the utility and importance of theſe little ſeminaries in particular. Theſe are points however which deſerve a fuller diſcuſſion now the ſubject is ſubmitted to public conſideration; and therefore they ſhall find a place in what follows----

IT was ſarcaſtically ſaid by Auguſtus concerning King Herod, "*I had rather be his hog than his ſon.*" The murder of Antipater by his own father Herod together with a fling at the Jewiſh prohibition of eating ſwine's fleſh occaſioned the above ſevere ſpeech. But is it not alſo fairly applicable to all neglectful parents? Better indeed is it to be ſome people's ſwine or dogs or horſes than their children; ſince they take all imaginable care to rear the former to their reſpective uſes, while to make honeſt men and good Chriſtians of the latter ſcarce ſeems to employ a thought. Children are endowed with natural reaſon and have

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ſouls capable of everlaſting happineſs, or liable to eternal miſery; but for want of parents or friends to inſtruct them early in the road to the former, they are almoſt unavoidably led into courſes that directly tend to the latter. It is to meet with ſuch void and uncultivated ſoils as theſe, that "*the Devil goeth about* "*like a roaring lion ſeeking whom he may devour.*" In ſhort, what can be more deplorable than the condition of that poor child, whoſe parents either through ignorance, vice or inability give him no inſtruction? Infancy and childhood are the proper ſeaſons of inſtilling principles of all kinds, and therefore ought more eſpecially to be filled up with ſuch as are good and virtuous. The ſoul is at that age moſt receptive and pliable, and in conſequence moſt fit for inſtruction. There exiſt then no impediments, no prejudices to hinder the acceſs of divine truths, there are few luſts or prepoſſeſſions to ſtand in the way and to diſpute their paſſage into the mind. Children are for the moſt part like moiſt and ſoft clay in the hands of the potter, apt and eaſy to be moulded into any ſhape at the will of the workman; but if neglected when of this due temperament, they ſoon become hardened and loſe all their ductility. If men according to our Saviour's own words muſt be brought into an "*infant-like*" ſtate of mind before they can profit by divine inſtruction; then are infants themſelves moſt capable of receiving it; and therefore this capacity and fitneſs of theirs ought to be duly cultivated and improved with the utmoſt care and diligence. When through want of early inſtruction the mind is once ſuffered to grow callous

lous in ignorance and vice, it is well known how difficult and diſheartening the taſk is to endeavour to ſtop the torrent of ſuch habitual wickedneſs and to recall an old practitioner from his beaten track of profaneneſs and impiety into the paths of ſobriety, induſtry and virtue. If a reformation is attempted among thoſe of advancing years, how ſhall one teach them knowledge who are grown old in ignorance? how ſhall one reclaim the grey-headed in ſin? Though a man ſhould ſpeak with the wiſdom of an Apoſtle or with the tongue of an Angel, yet inveterate habits would even thus be ſcarce broken through, or the ſtrong prejudices of ignorance and ſtupidity even thus be conquered. Though he be ever ſo diligent in informing thoſe, who are grown old in iniquity and ignorance, that ſuch and ſuch things are written in the book of God; though he read to them portions of Scripture levelled at their peculiar vices, yet all this amounts not to their being able to ſee it, as it is written, with their own eyes and to read for themſelves God's dreadful denunciations againſt the hardened ſinner and his gracious promiſes of forgiveneſs to the returning one. If he wiſh to ſet before ſuch the duty of bringing up their children in the fear and nurture of the Lord, alas it is a very little way they can proceed in ſuch a work! for how can they inſtruct others who have been bred up in perfect ignorance themſelves? or what can they teach their children, who themſelves know nothing? Such parents are not able to give good gifts unto their children; for according to the wiſe man's ſaying, (Eccleſ. xxv, 3) "*what can he expect*

" *to find in his age (that he may give to others) who hath gathered* " *nothing for himſelf in his youth?*" If he would fain perſuade them to ſpend the Lord's Day in a religious manner, how ſhall he ſet about it? For let us make the beſt of the caſe and ſuppoſe (though the contrary is too generally true) that one, who has been bred in total ignorance, goes conſtantly to Church, yet that employs a very ſmall portion of the Sunday. What then is to be done with the reſt? There is an eaſy anſwer for him, who is capable of receiving it, " *read what is improving to yourſelf and* " *inſtruct your family at home.*" But what can that perſon do to whom the very ſhape of letters is unknown? He can neither employ the leiſure hours of Sunday with profit to himſelf nor others. We know what is the too frequent conſequence of ſuch inability, that ſuch an helpleſs " *ignorant*" at the beſt but loiters away the precious hours of that day, without knowing whither to go or what to do with himſelf at home, and therefore it is well if he has prudence and forbearance enough not to go whither he ought not, and to ſpend the earnings of his weekly labour in improper places. Thus the day of the Lord is not barely conſumed in total idleneſs, but being ſtained in its courſe by all manner of profaneneſs terminates at length in ſcenes of drunkenneſs and debauchery. This is dreadful to think on---would to God it were not too true! Humanity therefore loudly calls on all, who are able, to eſpouſe the cauſe of poor and ignorant children, and to endeavour to imprint on their minds ideas of goodneſs and virtue " *while they are children,*" that they may not become hardened ſinners at a later period of life. Now

Now many reaſons may be aſſigned for referring this general outline of inſtruction to Sunday in particular, though by no means to the excluſion of any weekly improvement, where there is opportunity and ability to procure it; and where any one has the means without hurting himſelf or family, and alſo the inclination to put one child or more of the poorer claſs to be regularly inſtructed during the whole week, it is certainly performing a moſt humane, charitable and praiſe-worthy action. But the uninſtructed children in many pariſhes are by far too numerous to be all taken care of in this complete manner: and therefore the preſent mode has been adopted for this amid other reaſons, viz. "*to render its utility as extenſive as poſſible.*" For by appropriating the charitable fund, where it may be poſſible to raiſe one, to the uſe of Sunday alone, numbers may be comprehended, even perhaps all the poor children of a place, who ſtand in need of ſuch aſſiſtance, whereas a very few only could be benefitted at the ſame expence for the whole week.

AGAIN, Sunday being a day of reſt from all manual labour, we are the more at liberty to employ it in the opening of the underſtanding and improvement of the heart, which is the proper buſineſs of the day.

ANOTHER benefit of Sunday Schools ariſes from collecting a number of young people together, who will be inured by theſe means to early and regular habits of attendance on God's worſhip. This alone would be a very deſireable and important circumſtance in their favour were there no other, as we know full

well from ſad experience, that thoſe among the poorer ſort eſpecially, who are not brought up in the good habit of going to Church, ſeldom acquire it in any great degree afterwards. For they never know when nor how to begin a good practice, to which they have not been accuſtomed, but to the neglect of which, as it leads them into every idle and vicious habit, they ſo frequently owe their utter deſtruction.

Will it not alſo be of the utmoſt advantage to the children themſelves (as well as to the general intereſts of virtue and religion) to be kept thus employed on the leiſure hours of Sunday in an uſeful and exemplary manner? If we have been frequently hurt at the idle and profane behaviour too viſible on the Lord's Day among the younger inhabitants of a place, by as many children as can be collected together under the inſpection of a careful and attentive perſon, by ſo many is the vagrant number leſſened, ſo many are taken for the time out of harm's way, ſo many are prevented during the hours of attendance from engaging in idle paſtimes, from uſing indecent and profane language, from being impertinent, impudent and vicious in their words and actions. Were they to be kept in this negative ſtate only and out of the power of being corrupted by bad example, the benefit would be great; but it is hoped and deſigned to go much further, even to the advancement in due time of poſitive goodneſs and virtue. The hours of the Lord's Day, in which theſe young perſons are ſecluded from evil doing, are to be employed in forwarding their well-doing. By being taught to read,

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they will know how to fill up many a vacant hour to advantage on future Sundays, when arrived at a ſtate of manhood, and will alſo have it in their power to improve their own children, who may not perhaps enjoy the opportunities of inſtruction. They will be taught the plaineſt duties of the Chriſtian religion, with a particular regard to what concerns their humble ſtation in life, and by the performance of which (as it will be inſtilled into them) they will moſt effectually conſult their own eaſe, proſperity and happineſs.

The booriſh ſtupidity of thoſe of the poorer claſs, who have never had the leaſt intercourſe with their betters, together with their failure in every decent mark of reſpect to their ſuperiors is well known to all, who have been converſant with their characters; neither is it at all ſurpriſing. For where the poor find themſelves totally neglected by thoſe above them and are conſequently in little hopes of receiving their favours, they want a ſpur to ſet them forwards, an encouragement to put on their beſt appearances by way of ingratiating themſelves into the notice of others. But the caſe becomes wonderfully altered, where their richer neighbours condeſcend to treat them with ſome degree of attention, to enter into their concerns and to alleviate their ſituation as far as poſſible. When their "*inte-*" "*reſts*" begin to be touched, the poor then (as well as their betters under like circumſtances) ſoon learn to exhibit all due marks of civility in their power; they then begin to ſtrive and vie with each other in reſpectful behaviour. Hence ariſes another

benefit

benefit of Sunday Schools, eſpecially as they comprehend ſuch numbers. For by drawing the children of the poor out of their obſcurity into notice and protection they tend to humanize a race of beings, who when left totally to themſelves ſeem little ſuperior to the beaſts they drive.

But at the ſame time that the rough manners of theſe poor children are poliſhing to a certain degree by their introduction into the preſence and countenance of their ſuperiors, a door is proportionably opening (ſince theſe two points go hand in hand) for the admiſſion of every important and neceſſary truth, for the practice of every plain and uſeful virtue. Herein therefore the utility of Sunday ſchools is very conſpicuous. For let us ſuppoſe a Clergyman ever ſo deſirous of inſtructing the poor and ignorant from the Pulpit, it is a great chance whether many of that ſort or their children are often to be ſeen at church: they therefore put themſelves out of the way of "*public*" advice and inſtruction. Little good then can be expected in this way; ſince thoſe who need the advice moſt are never at hand to receive it. But by collecting a number of poor children together in a private room or ſchool, he has wonderful opportunities of opening their underſtandings and of improving their hearts. In his occaſional viſits to the Schools he is looked up to with a degree of attention and reſpect, and whatever he ſays is liſtened to with eagerneſs. The children ſhew a ſatisfaction and pleaſure in his commendations, as well as a ſhame under his diſcountenance and cenſures. Being not before a mixed multi-

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tude he can adapt every thing he ſpeaks to the peculiar exigencies and capacities of his young flock, and can explain their duty to them by word of mouth as occaſion dictates, which is always better underſtood by ſuch children and makes a deeper impreſſion than any other method of inſtruction. The little Tracts likewiſe on moral and religious duties, which the children carry home with them to be read by their parents or others----during the courſe of the week, and which are returned on the following Sundays to be exchanged for others, is a kind of ſilent and continual preaching from houſe to houſe on the moſt plain and familiar duties of common life.

Such then are the general advantages of Sunday Schools, on which we have a right to build good hopes of ſucceſs in due time provided theſe inſtitutions are cloſely followed up and diſcreetly managed. One point more muſt not be overlooked, whoſe gradual accompliſhment (were they ſuffered to take a pretty general effect) would be of the utmoſt importance to the community at large, and which might lead thoſe, who have not higher motives in view or who have even little or no ſenſe of religion themſelves, to encourage their inſtitution. The increaſe of the Poor, and in conſequence of Rates neceſſary for their ſupport is become a matter of moſt ſerious concern. But why do the Poor increaſe ſo faſt? why do ſo many young and able, men apply for relief as being ſtarving and out of all employ? why are ſo many young families left to pariſh ſupport, but becauſe their parents are idle, drunken, vicious, and will not

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when they might, get into regular and conſtant work? It is true indeed that in many parts of this county (and perhaps elſewhere) there has of late been a real failure of employment for labourers, owing to inclement ſeaſons and ſcanty crops; ſo that many induſtrious people were reduced to extremities and compelled to apply for relief without any fault of their own. This however acts only as a partial cauſe for the increaſe of Poor, and it is to be hoped will be only a temporary one. But no one can deny that a more general ſource of their numbers is to be looked for in their habits of idleneſs and vice. Now it is frequently ſaid, "*that the poor in workhouſes, and thoſe who want "relief ought to be employed and to be made to earn ſomething towards "their own ſupport.*" They certainly ſhould. But is it not ſtriking ſtill deeper at the root of the evil complained of, if we endeavour to inſtil into the poorer ſort, while young, ſuch ideas and principles as ſhall make them ever ſenſible of the obligations they lie under to provide all they can for themſelves and families? as ſhall make them aſhamed to apply for any relief, but when under the preſſure of real and unmerited ſufferings?--as ſhall make them ever deſirous and ready to employ themſelves abroad, and conſequently not want employment in a Pariſh-houſe? But theſe are the very deſigns and purpoſes of Sunday Schools, viz. earneſtly to inculcate the good cauſe of honeſty, ſobriety and induſtry. Theſe are principles, which, wherever they are followed up by practice, lay an excellent foundation to hope for a gradual diminution in due time of theſe heavy burdens, and that by a

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method of all others the moſt deſireable and effectual, viz. by a diminution of the number of Paupers themſelves.

But that we may not be accuſed of arguing altogether on one ſide of the queſtion, let us attend to every ſhadow of an objection that can be made on the other. "*What good (perhaps it "may be urged) can you expect to do by one day's inſtruction in a "week? will not your young ſcholar forget every thing and learn "more harm in the week than you can teach him good on a Sunday?*" This is certainly an objection of little force when made ſo generally. No doubt there will be failures in the deſired effects of this as well as of many other good deſigns. But how ſhall the proportion of good or evil be known without a trial? Or why ſhould thoſe, who are well inclined to receive inſtruction and advice, be excluded from its benefits, becauſe others leſs worthy will continue obſtinate in their ignorance and error? And as to want of time for inſtruction, it is well known, that there is ample leiſure on one day (on Sunday eſpecially) to hear and to learn more than there is time or inclination to practice during the other ſix. Beſides; the proper employment of the Sunday in habits of regularity and decency is what forms the primary object of theſe ſchools. As to improvement in reading (to which theſe objectors principally refer) ſuffice it to obſerve, that where the diſpoſitions of the children are in the leaſt tractable and docile, and the parents themſelves conſiderate in the weekly management of their families, ſo as to forward the views of their benefactors, all the reading and learning, that is eſſential or de-

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ſireable may be eaſily acquired. Why then wiſh to refuſe any one the opportunity of doing "*ſome good*", becauſe perhaps he cannot accompliſh "*all*" he may wiſh? It was never the deſign of any promoter of theſe ſchools to preclude weekly inſtruction, but where circumſtances permit, to co-operate with it; where they do not, to be a ſubſtitute for it. The huſbandman who ſhould think it uſeleſs to cultivate the ſeventh portion of his land, becauſe by ſome untoward accident he was hindered from doing the ſame by the reſt, would be highly and juſtly cenſurable for ſuch negligence. If then there ſhould be neither opportunity nor ability to keep children in proper order for ſeven days together, muſt one therefore be prevented from doing it for one day in ſeven? The ſeventh part of a young perſon's life is too large a portion to be wholly neglected; ſince if properly cultivated it would not only produce rich ſeed in itſelf, but ſcatter its good fruits through every other part.

It is further objected by ſome few perſons "*that there is no "uſe in inſtructing the children of the poor at all; better let it alone; "it only tends to take them off from an early application to induſtry, "and is frequently apt to ſet them in ſome meaſure above themſelves.*"

As to taking them off from manual induſtry the objection is obviated in "*Sunday*" Schools. Inſtruction indeed ſhould never exclude induſtry among the poorer ſort, but ſhould go hand in hand with it; and then it may be affirmed with ſome degree of confidence, "*that the one will ever encourage and improve the "other,*" and an appeal may be made to the experience of all

all maſters whether the ſervants and labourers they employ are not uſually ſpeaking more diſſolute, headſtrong and ungovernable the more ignorant they are? In proportion therefore as the rank weeds of ignorance may be rooted out, there will be room to ſow the good ſeeds of ſobriety, induſtry and docility in their ſtead, not without the pleaſing proſpect of a rich and plentiful harveſt.

But ſurely it muſt be a miſtaken notion in general to think that the poor can be hurt by inſtruction. For if the very few inſtances theſe objectors might be able to quote were ſearched to the bottom, it would plainly appear, that they aroſe not from the circumſtance of ſuch young perſons having been put in the way of inſtruction, but from their own idle and untoward diſpoſitions, who would not convert it to its true end and purpoſe. For how can leſſons of humility tend to ſet any perſons above themſelves? how can teaching them to be reſpectful and grateful to their benefactors make them impertinent and ſaucy? How can the inſtilling into them the heinous nature of ſin and ſtriving to root it out of their conſtitution incline them the more to commit it? Does deterring them by the ſevereſt threatenings from lying and ſtealing rather incline them to do both? Does adviſing them to be induſtrious by every poſſible argument that concerns their own intereſt, cauſe them to be idle? Surely no conſiderate perſon can ſay or think thus, nor can any one, who has a true ſenſe of religion or a thorough knowledge of the deſign of all ſchools of charity, object to their encouragement,

though they ſhould not in all inſtances anſwer their propoſed end? But this is entering on another objection comprehending Sunday Schools together with other ſchools of charity.

For it is ſometimes further urged, "*that allowing inſtruction* "*to be profitable in itſelf to poor people, yet what good do we ſee* "*often ariſe from ſchools of charity? what numbers turn out ill,* "*who have been educated in them?*---This may be too true: but what good thing in the world does at all times and in all caſes anſwer all the good purpoſes of its inſtitution? What method of education in particular, though ever ſo well contrived, is ſufficient always to accompliſh its end? Do our own children how carefully and diſcreetly ſoever managed always prove ſo good as we could wiſh? Happy indeed would be the man "*who had his* "*quiver full of them,*" were this always the caſe. But how often does the contrary happen! how often do we ſee the beſt of parents in better ſtations fail in their expectations of this ſort! how often do we ſee their children rebel againſt them, tranſgreſs their lawful authority, caſt all their good admonitions behind them and in ſpite of every thing that can be done for them ruſh headlong into ruin and deſtruction! Since ſuch is often the caſe, what right have we to expect a greater proportion of good to ariſe from ſchools of charity than we daily ſee from ſchools of affluence? or what reaſon have we to think worſe of the former than of the latter; There muſt always be a mixture of good and evil character in both, for which it would be unjuſt to cenſure the plan of education itſelf or to think that regularity and good

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inſtruction can poſſibly of itſelf tend to produce any thing but what is good.

ARGUMENTS thus ſtated in behalf of Sunday Schools and objections (ſuch as they are) anſwered, ſuffer the author to diverge a little from his immediate point, and to draw the attention of his reader (for the purpoſe of emulation) towards thoſe noble plans of infant inſtruction and ſupport for the poor and ignorant, which the Metropolis exhibits to our view. What rare inſtances of this kind of benevolence are to be found there! The many illuſtrious foundations of this ſort are an honour and ornament to the Nation in general; a ſpecies of charity which perhaps has hitherto contributed "*to cover the multitude of its ſins.*" We know the nature of ſanctuaries and privileged places in the days of ignorance and idol worſhip, viz. that they were a refuge and protection to notorious offenders and abandoned profligates, and that the proverbial ſaying, "*ad Aſylum confugere*" was not very honourable to the perſon who made uſe of it. But our "*Chriſtian* "*Aſylum* ſpeaks a very different language. "*I open my gates as* "*an houſe of refuge to the forlorn orphan, to ſtand in the place of* "*parents and friends, to protect, maintain and educate ſuch in all* "*Chriſtian knowledge.*"

AGAIN, "*to expoſe infants*" was an approved but barbarous cuſtom in many ancient kingdoms; but "*Come unto me, all ye* "FOUNDLINGS *of mean and uncertain parentage, and I will feed,* "*clothe and inſtruct you*"---ſays the very extenſive and humane inſtitution bearing that name.

WHAT

WHAT a truly royal and religious foundation is Chriſt's Hoſpital! where near a thouſand children of indigent parents receive their daily ſuſtenance, their temporal and ſpiritual improvement, where all as they advance forward are not ſent into the world in one and the ſame beaten track, but are diſpoſed of according to their particular turn of mind and to the improvements they have made, for which reaſon this illuſtrious houſe of charity has produced many ornaments to itſelf and to the nation in various walks of life.

ANOTHER moſt honourable ſpectacle muſt not go without a mention; this is the annual ſight of between five and ſix thouſand children collected under one roof. If we aſk "*whoſe are "all theſe?*" the reply is ready; "*we are the children of Benevo-"lence; we are all brought up by charity in our reſpective pariſhes; "we are all met together under this ſacred Dome to lift up our voices "unto God and to praiſe him for his goodneſs; to pray for his choiceſt "bleſſings on the heads of our generous benefactors, by whoſe bounty we "are thus maintained and inſtructed.*" This annual meeting of all the Charity Schools belonging to the Metropolis in Saint Paul's Cathedral is one of the moſt ſublime and affecting ſights that can be conceived. Who can view ſo many thouſand innocents reſcued thus (if not their own fault) from ignorance and wickedneſs and not be moved? who can hear them raiſing their united voices in one grand choral hymn of gratitude to their Maker without an elated heart and overflowing eye?

By the numbers* of children who are thus educated, not only in the Metropolis but throughout the whole kingdom, by the daily additions that are making through the extenſive plan and increaſe of Sunday Schools, even to the triumphal ſong of thouſands and tens of thouſands, a ſtranger to our laws might be inclined to think, that our Legiſlature had adopted the Spartan mode of educating "*all children*" at the expence of the Public. But he ought to be told, that the voluntary benevolence of the Nation had much improved that rigid code; ſince we do not ſeek to break the bonds of natural affection by tearing away every child from his anxious parent, but only wiſh to open many charitable endowments for the relief of the ignorant and neceſſitous parent, that "*his child*" alſo may not want the conveniences and improvements of life: nor do we confine his education (like Spartan Schools) to inculcating the ideas of a rough and hardened ſoldier, but fit him rather for employments of peace and the exerciſe of mutual forgiveneſs; wiſhing to unite labour and induſtry with uſeful inſtruction, to teach him ſobriety, temperance and patience, to humanize his heart, and fill it with all the mild and ſocial virtues of Chriſtianity.

* The number of children educated in Charity Schools in London amounts to upwards of 6000; in other counties of England to above 23,000; in Scotland to near 8000.--Our own county is ſaid to have 62 ſchools and near 1300 children in them. See Society's Account (for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge) 1784.--- The Author has not ſufficient information at preſent (and he wiſhes not to delay publication for the purpoſe of collecting it) to aſcertain the numbers in Sunday Schools through the kingdom, but knows that they amount to many thouſands and that they are daily increaſing.

Let emulation then ſpur us on in our reſpective diſtricts "*to go and do likewiſe.*" Let reflection make us ſenſible, that the Goſpel itſelf and all its glorious privileges are not confined to the rich and noble, but relate indifferently to all ranks and degrees of men, and to all children of what birth or fortune ſoever. All have ſouls equally capable of ſalvation; all are equally obliged to aim at and endeavour after it in the beſt manner they are able under the ſame penalties of neglect. But "*how ſhall* "*all do it*"---is a queſtion fit to be aſked on this occaſion, ſeeing all have not the ſame opportunities of coming at the knowledge of Chriſt and his religion (how well ſoever inclined) for want of that inſtruction which is neceſſary for its attainment? The anſwer is plain and obvious. The Providence of God has provided a way for it by diſpenſing his favours to many liberal and well-diſpoſed perſons in ſuch a comparative abundance or ſufficiency at leaſt, as enables them to contribute towards the education of the poorer ſort without the leaſt detriment to themſelves or families. He has encouraged them likewiſe ſo to do by promiſing the moſt glorious rewards to all that will perform it. He has declared his readineſs to receive what they ſhall think fit to beſtow on ſuch ignorant and indigent objects, to conſider it as given to Himſelf, and that He will make their benevolent diſpoſitions a principal inquiry at the Day of Judgment. Chriſt has further expreſſly commanded us all "*to ſuffer little* "*children to come unto Him and to forbid them not.*" Let us not then be ſo cruel to them or ſo diſobedient unto Chriſt, as to forbid

forbid them notwithſtanding. Yet ſuch is the ſituation of many poor children, that if we do not contribute towards bringing them to Chriſt, we ſhall be a ſort of forbidders of their coming, as they have no other viſible way of knowing Him. " *If then* " (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) *there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any* " *comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and* " *mereies,*" (Phil. ii, 1) let us all, Clergy and Laity, preſs forward and do our utmoſt for the inſtruction and improvement of young Children in all that is good. Let us conſider them for the moſt as helpleſs infants that have few or no friends to bring them forwards but ourſelves. Let us look on them as our humble petitioners and let us grant their requeſts to the utmoſt of our power. Let us reflect on our bleſſed Saviour's treatment of poor children on his humanity and tenderneſs towards them when they were brought into his preſence; " *how He blamed* " *thoſe that would have kept them from Him; how He exhorted all* " *men to follow their innocency; how He took them up in his arms,* " *laid his hands upon them and bleſſed them.*" And though we cannot bleſs them in the manner He did, yet let us at all times be ready to extend our hearts towards them in all acts of benevolence, particularly in that of procuring them ſome ſeeds of good and wholeſome education, from whence numberleſs bleſſings will flow to themſelves and others, to private families, and to the Public in general.

N. B. As the author had many applications from the Clergy of Rocheſter and others, after the delivery of the foregoing Sermon, for a full and particular account of the methods he took to eſtabliſh the Schools in Boughton-Blean and Hearnhill pariſhes, and likewiſe for his Plan and Regulations of the ſame, he takes the liberty of ſubjoining the following letter, which was lately written to his brother Mr. Moore, of North Cray, and contains the deſired information.

Dear Brother,

I AM happy to comply with your requeſt of giving you every information relative to the eſtabliſhment of Sunday Schools in my own Pariſh of Boughton and in my Curacy of Hearnhill; and from which I have every reaſon to hope for ſucceſs that ſo ſhort a trial can juſtify. The profanation of Sunday by its employment "*in every way but the right one*" has given you (I am confident) as much concern as it has me. The high in ſtation treat the day and all its ſervices with a ſovereign contempt; thoſe of middle rank employ it either in ſettling their worldly accounts, or in forming ſuch engagements as conſtantly interfere with their regular attendance at Church, while the poorer ſort conſume it in common paſtimes and diverſions, if not in drunkenneſs and debauchery. The diſorder is daily getting ground, nor is the remedy at hand of effectual application. The ſuperior orders are apt to deſpiſe and ridicule any honeſt endea-

endeavours to promote what is ſerious and good among them, whilſt our equals care but little for our advice and the Poor are really too ignorant to profit much by its occaſional offers. For I am much inclined to impute a great deal of their inſenſibility in religious concerns to their total ignorance of thoſe matters rather than to any worſe habits and diſpoſitions in them than in their betters; an uncharitable point of view in which ſome people are ready to place them, but without juſtifiable grounds for their aſſertions. But you wiſhed me to give you a regular and circumſtantial account of my proceedings in a buſineſs, which by the benevolent concurrence of my pariſhioners I have been enabled to bring to a proſperous iſſue. It would be unjuſt to a very reſpectable and worthy Clergyman of Canterbury (Mr. Hearne) not to inform you, that the introduction of theſe ſchools into his pariſhes in Canterbury in January laſt (the very firſt in this County) furniſhed me with the hint of attempting the ſame. I wrote to that gentleman on the ſubject, who very freely communicated his plans to me, and which I was happy to follow, as far as local circumſtances permitted. The firſt thing to be provided was the eſſential means for their ſupport, which made it neceſſary, as well as otherwiſe reſpectful and proper, to diſcover the ſentiments and to ſound the inclinations of the Gentlemen and other ſubſtantial people in the place on the introduction of ſuch a plan. I was extremely happy not only to meet with a warm approbation of the deſign in general terms, but

with a more ſubſtantial proof of concurrence in the promiſe of a liberal and annual ſubſcription exceeding my expectations. Thus fortified with the means, my next buſineſs was to viſit every houſe in the Pariſh where there were any children and to propoſe my plan for their Sunday inſtruction; and as the rich were ready to contribute, ſo I muſt add for their credit that the poor ſeemed as gratefully to accept; ſo that I ſoon collected the names of about "*fourſcore children*," whoſe parents thankfully accepted my offer. There only remained to provide proper teachers. I procured a man and his wife to attend and inſtruct all the children I ſhould ſend to their houſe on a Sunday at "*One Guinea and a Half per Quarter*," and another woman in another diſtrict at "*One Guinea per Quarter.*" Theſe perſons are conſtantly to appear with the children at church, where they have ſeats appropriated to themſelves. All this being adjuſted, I had a number of the following papers printed, ſtuck on the church doors and diſperſed about.

"*SUNDAY SCHOOLS*

"*Supported by voluntary Subſcription in the Pariſh of Boughton-*
"*Blean, Kent*, 1785.

"*The Points aimed at in the introduction of Sunday Schools, are*
"*---to furniſh opportunities of inſtruction to the Children of the*
"*poorer part of the pariſh without interfering with any induſtry of*
"*the week-days; and to inure children to early habits of going to*

"*church*

" *church and of ſpending the leiſure hours of Sunday decently and* " *virtuouſly. The children are to be taught to read and to be in-* " *ſtructed in the plain duties of the Chriſtian Religion, with a par-* " *ticular view to their good and induſtrious behaviour in their future* " *character of Labourers and Servants. The extent of the plan muſt* " *be guided by the Subſcription that may be raiſed; and all perſons* " *willing to encourage the ſame, even by the ſmalleſt donations, are* " *deſired to apply to the Reverend Charles Moore, Vicar.*

" REGULATION *of the* DAY.

" *When Service is in the Morning at Boughton, the children are* " *to meet at their ſchool-room by eight o'clock and to ſtay till ten,* " *when they are to go with their teacher to Church. After Service* " *they are to go to their reſpective homes, and to meet again at the* " *ſchool by two o'clock; and to ſtay there till ſix in ſummer, or as long* " *as day-light will permit in winter. When ſervice is in the after-* " *noon at Boughton, the children are to meet as before by eight o'clock* " *in the morning and to ſtay till eleven, when they are to go home.* " *They are to return to ſchool by one o'clock and ſtay till it is time to* " *go to church. After Service they are to return again with their* " *teacher and to ſtay till ſix o'clock as before, or as long as day-light* " *permits.*

" N. B. *All that is expected of their parents is, that they ſend* " *their children regularly to ſchool, clean in their perſons, (which* " *coſts nothing) and as decently clothed as their circumſtances will* " *permit.*".

You

(You know our ſervice here is alternate with Hearnhill; where a ſchool has alſo ſince been eſtabliſhed under the ſame regulations and contains about thirty children.)

Our ſchools at Boughton were accordingly opened on May 1, when "*ſeventy-eight*" children, very decent and clean in their perſons and apparel appeared in a body at Church with their teachers. Indulge me a moment in the pleaſing recollection; it was a new and a grateful ſight and will well bear reflection. I make a point of viſiting the ſchool moſt Sundays to ſee what children attend, and how they go on. Very few of the whole number can read at all, and many would never have been in the way of any inſtruction, but for ſome comprehenſive plan of this ſort. As I found no ſhort prayers any where exactly applicable to this new ſcheme. I drew up the following to be got by heart and to be repeated in the ſchools.

"A MORNING PRAYER *to be uſed by the Children attending* "*the Sunday Schools.*

"*O God!* "who ſuffereſt the little children to come unto "Thee and forbiddeſt them not" *hearken unto our prayers, we* "*moſt humbly beſeech Thee, and grant, that as we increaſe in years,* "*ſo we may increaſe in all goodneſs and piety. Make us thankful for* "*theſe opportunities of inſtruction that are given us by the charity of* "*our benefactors and make us deſirous of improving ſuch bleſſings to* "*the utmoſt of our power. For which purpoſe we pray, that Thou*

"*wilt*

" *wilt make us diligent and faithful obſervers of all the good leſſons*
" *we are taught; and particularly we pray for thy grace to keep the*
" *Lord's Day holy, never to take thy name in vain, to abhor deceit*
" *and lying, to be chaſte and ſober, honeſt and induſtrious: teach us*
" *to be dutiful to thee, O God, above all things, and to be ever fearful*
" *of offending againſt thy commandments. Teach us to reverence thy*
" *holy word, to be grateful and obedient to our ſuperiors for all their*
" *favours, to be affectionate and kind in our behaviour to one another.*
" *In a word, enable us, O God, to be good children in all things, that*
" *ſo we may grow up in the practice of every uſeful and Chriſtian*
" *virtue. All which we beg through the merits and mediation of*
" *Jeſus Chriſt, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. Amen.*

" An EVENING PRAYER *on leaving the School.*

" *We thank Thee, O God, for the inſtruction we have this day*
" *received and for the opportunity we have had of attending thy houſe*
" *and ſervice. Grant, that whatever good we have heard this day*
" *with our outward ears may be ingrafted inwardly in our hearts, ſo*
" *as to bring forth in us the fruits of practical virtue and piety*
" *through the courſe of the enſuing week. Grant us health to meet*
" *again on the next Lord's Day to receive and profit by further in-*
" *ſtruction. Bleſs all our relations, friends and benefactors, and make*
" *us ever ſenſible of and thankful for the advantages we enjoy above*
" *many others, who have the misfortune to be bred up in the paths of*
" *ignorance, idleneſs and vice. O may we ſtrive to deſerve theſe*

" *diſtinctions*

" *diſtinctions and prove ourſelves worthy of them. Hear, O Lord, we*
" *beſeech Thee, theſe prayers of children, and hearken unto their humble*
" *petitions, which are offered at the Throne of Heaven, through Jeſus*
" *Chriſt, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour. Amen.*"

ALL books are found for the uſe of the ſchools. Our little library for the current year (being as much variety as our finances would afford) conſiſts of Prayer Books, Teſtaments, Spelling Books, Watts's firſt Set of Catechiſms; the Tracts are, Chriſtian Monitors, Stonehouſe's Religious Inſtruction of Children, Sin and Danger of neglecting public Worſhip; all which (except Watts's Catechiſm) are to be had at eaſy rates by Subſcribers to the Society in London. The former ſet of books are kept at the ſchools to be uſed only there and at Church, (except by way of indulgence to a good child) otherwiſe we ſhould have new ones to find oftener than could be afforded. The other Tracts are deſigned as much for the uſe of the parents and other pariſhioners (in order to keep them up to the ſpirit of the plan) as of the children. Some of the children therefore carry home one or other of theſe every Sunday which they are to bring back the following, and interchange with one another. Freſh books will be introduced in courſe on the common vices of the poor; but I thought theſe general ones beſt adapted for the encouragement of the deſign at firſt. When capable they are to undergo little examinations in

Church

Church and to have little rewards accordingly---but we are not prepared for this yet. Our expences this year will amount to about "*Twenty Pounds*" but not ſo much another, as forms were to be purchaſed to accommodate the teachers, and a much larger quantity of books (which coſt near Eight Pounds) was wanting at firſt ſetting out than will be neceſſary again in the ſame year. Our annual ſubſcription amounts to about Sixteen Pounds, which I think will do pretty well in future:---this year we had extraordinary helps.

You know my pariſh here (though only a village) is pretty populous, having above one hundred and fifty houſes in it, and abounds with poor. A great number of theſe can neither inſtruct their families themſelves, nor are able to pay others for doing it: and though many of the well-diſpoſed inhabitants ſelect children here and there to put them to weekly ſchools, yet numbers are and muſt be totally overlooked. Theſe then are the firſt objects of Sunday Schools, though by no means to the excluſion of as many more as ſubſcriptions will accommodate. As to age, five or ſix years old is quite early enough, and if the numbers were neceſſarily to be limited I would not receive them before ſeven or eight. I have hitherto made no reſtriction of age, but admit all who offer, provided only their parents "*live in*" (no matter whether "*belong to*") the pariſh; and I wiſh them to continue as long as they are inclined to ſtay and behave well. If regulations ſhould hereafter be found requiſite on this head, they muſt

be made as circumſtances direct; at preſent there is no need of limitation. The generality of the preſent number are between ſeven and twelve, not from any ſelection of my own, but becauſe older ones are more unwilling to attend, and many circumſtances intervene to prevent it, were they ſo diſpoſed. I perfectly agree with you, that a moſt important age is from twelve to ſixteen or upwards; and that could they be retained in the due mixture of ſerious and religious exerciſes with their habits of induſtry, and in the regular obſervance of Sunday till that age, the impreſſion would probably laſt in a great meaſure through life; whereas now it is ſometimes apt to be overpowered from various cauſes before well ſettled. But about twelve years of age the condition of theſe poor children materially changes. A parent, though perhaps no extraordinary liver himſelf, is many times not unwilling to have his child taught what is good, and even to encourage his regularity of behaviour. But when once that child gets into a ſervice (which he certainly ought to do as ſoon as he can) the caſe is altered. The generality of maſters and miſtreſſes (eſpecially of the farming ſort) pay little attention to any concerns of their ſervants but what appertains to their daily labour. The younger lads are ſoon laughed out of their little ſtock of decency, regularity and knowledge by their older companions in the field and ſtable; neither does the ſcene among the female ſervants within doors afford us a more pleaſing proſpect. To ſo great a head of effrontery are farming ſervants

arrived

arrived (though I muſt think it owing "*primarily*" to the bad examples and inattention of the Maſters themſelves, who will ſubmit to no temporary inconveniences for the diſcouragement of a wicked ſervant nor "*unite*" in requiring a good moral character from the laſt perſon they ſerved, which would have prevented much of the evil complained of) to ſuch a height of impertinence (I ſay) they are arrived, that where a maſter is well inclined and regular himſelf and would fain perſuade his ſervants to be the ſame (eſpecially on a Sunday) he is ſaucily replied to--"*I was hired to do your farming buſineſs, am I neglect-*"*ful of that? but I was not hired to go to Church, nor will I, but* "*when I like it.*"---Such being the caſe it would no doubt be an important improvement of the preſent plan of Sunday Schools were it poſſible to extend them by any means to the care and inſtruction of "*grown*" children from twelve to ſixteen at leaſt; and though there might be numberleſs difficulties attending it, yet ſomething perhaps might be ſtruck out of this kind, which if it did only "*a little good*" might be well worth a trial. Perſons of this age muſt not be mixt with the younger ſet nor the ſexes with each other, neither ſhould they be confined to the cloſe attendance of a School. Were the maſters, who employ them, well inclined themſelves, and had the young people been previouſly ſo well inſtructed, as to be deſirous of continuing in a ſtate of ſobriety and regularity, their attendance on neceſſary buſineſs at home might be ſo managed as to give them frequent,

if not conſtant opportunities of appearing at Church, and of attending perhaps for "*One Hour*" on a Sunday Evening to ſome inſtructor, who in the moſt eaſy and familiar manner ſhould read with, explain to and queſtion them on the plaineſt and ſimpleſt points of morality and religion. But the greateſt difficulty would conſiſt in finding out proper inſtructors: the poorer ſort are in general incapable of the office and the better would not undertake it; neither indeed could many pariſhes in the country (to which my ideas have been pretty much confined in this letter) be able to ſupport ſo much expence. Though therefore the plan of Sunday Inſtruction is not ſo complete as it might be wiſhed, yet it extends perhaps as far as circumſtances will allow, at leaſt for the preſent. God grant it his bleſſing as far as it goes; and though we may be obliged to leave children to themſelves too early, yet ſurely it is better to leave them furniſhed with ſome ideas of what is good, rather than in a ſtate of total ignorance; which latter would be the caſe of numbers, who now attend Sunday Schools. Good principles will probably return and exert themſelves at ſome time or other, even though neglected at firſt; whereas the Void of no principles at all is truly deplorable. I am therefore very thankful to my pariſhioners here for co-operating ſo chearfully and ſubſtantially with my wiſhes as they have done---many a Clergyman is not ſo fortunate. No plan indeed of reformation ever ſeemed to meet with a more general and hearty approbation, wherever it

is known. The Laity* are at leaſt as induſtrious in promoting it as the Clergy; a circumſtance, which in my opinion the Clergy ought thankfully to embrace. Away with narrow jealouſies of interference, which I underſtand have ſubſiſted in ſome places: let but good be done, no matter by whom. I do not know whether you ſaw an account in the papers lately of the aſſiduity of Biſhop Law in Ireland to eſtabliſh theſe ſchools through his dioceſe of Clonfert, on the moſt liberal and comprehenſive plan with reſpect to all Sectaries. I hope the account was true. But to come nearer home and into our own county. The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury have taken up the cauſe as a body, and the example of Mr. Hearne, whoſe name I mentioned before as the firſt promoter in this county has been followed by many other pariſhes in Canterbury. Steps are taking in Chatham for the ſame purpoſe, and the Clergy in and about Rocheſter are in general very deſirous of their eſtabliſhment. I hear likewiſe of ſeveral other places in the country, where they are meditating their introduction; but that the Clergy and others have wanted information on the ſubject. This has ſwayed with me to venture on publication, which if it ſhould prove of any ſervice to the cauſe will make me very happy. I hazard its imperfections under the general utility and importance of the ſubject. It is poſſible we may have ſomething ſoon from the reſpectable Mr. Jonas Hanway on theſe matters, as he has

* Particularly James Six, Eſq; of Canterbury.

lately

lately (I know) wrote to the Mayor of Canterbury for the purpoſe of information. If ſuch be the caſe, we ſhall no doubt receive much inſtruction for the general management and improvement of the plan from his well-informed and benevolent pen; and which perhaps will make all ſuch writers as myſelf on the ſubject wiſh to ſhrink back into their original obſcurity. With what ſatisfaction muſt Mr. Raikes of Glouceſter view the progreſs of his humane and conſiderate ſcheme. May he yet live to ſee the good fruits of the virtue that is gone out from him!---You deſired a very full and circumſtantial account of this buſineſs, which is the only apology for this length of letter from

Yours, &c.

CHARLES MOORE.

Boughton Blean,

June 27, 1785.

FINIS.

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